



ART INDUSTRIES
AT
SOUTH KENSINGTON.

No. I.
WORK OF FEMALE STUDENTS.

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THE prizes given away and the prize works from time to time exhibited keep us pretty well aware of the extent and quality of the art education which has its head-quarters at South Kensington and its outposts in almost every considerable town in England, and in many in Scotland and Ireland. But though we may be glad to know that a vast number of young men and women are learning at the public expense to draw the human figure, to paint pictures, and to design patterns tolerably, we remember that all this is merely a means to an end, and are anxious to learn to what account such an education is turned by those who receive it. What percentage of the students go out into the world and maintain themselves by working at the branch of art in which they have been instructed? What percentage relapse into ordinary vocations, in which the accomplishments they have acquired are nothing more than a pleasant amusement for their leisure hours? These are questions upon the answers to which must hang our judgment of the system of Government art education. The nation pays its money in order that the art-instincts of the students may be cultivated, not only for their own pleasure, but for the good of the community. The return it looks for is not only the proficiency of the learners, but the aid they contribute in after-life towards the development of the arts and manufactures of the country. The education
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the State is expected to give is professional and not amateur, and it would have the students become real workers, and not mere *dilettanti*.



HIS being the case, an account of any *bond fide* results which follow the course of education given in the Government Art Schools should be of more value and interest than all the reports of prize-givings and exhibitions which occur during that course; and if these results are not at present great, we must fairly remember that, while it is a very simple thing to teach the students in the schools, it is not so easy for them when they go out into the world to elbow their way in crowded trades and manufactures. We need not say that, difficult as this may be for the male, it is twice as difficult for the female students, and we propose in the present article to discuss only the case of the latter. Where we can find that ten women who have received an art education are supporting themselves by art, we may be sure that twenty men are able to do so, for neither custom nor Trades' Unions stand in their way. The employment of women is one of the problems of the day, and if the Government schools can be shown to have contributed towards its practical solution they will deserve our praise. Let us, then, see what they have done in this direction.



EMALE students in the Government Schools of Design secured so long as 25 years ago a place in the trade of wood engraving which they have since lost. There was an outcry from the workmen against them, but they have been driven out less by that than by the change which has come over wood engraving itself, and

Painting upon Pottery.

and which has made it a trade unsuitable to women. A great deal of the work, especially for illustrated newspapers, has to be done in a hurry, and compels hours which are too long and late for women. About 1854 a few female students got employment as designers in lace, diapers, and other flax work, and at the present time a limited number are employed in designing patterns for wall-paper, cups and saucers, etc., but it cannot be said that they have as yet fairly found their way into these manufactures. One encouraging sign of the times out of doors is the very great demand which is growing up for women teachers in drawing and painting, but it is only within the precincts of South Kensington that we can find a considerable number of female students really employed in art manufactures, and earning their 25s. to 45s. a week by working at the arts which the Government has taught them. Here they are employed in two branches of art, one of which will soon bear transplanting into the outer world as a new industry. The other is painting upon pottery, and is carried on at a branch factory and kiln which Her Majesty's Commissioners for the Exhibition of 1851 have allowed a great Staffordshire firm to build close to the Albert Hall, upon a piece of ground leased for seven years on the understanding that only students from the art schools shall be employed. Though only on a limited scale, this factory is worked with great success, and is the germ of greater things. It is worthy of notice as the only place in London devoted to the manufacture of high-class pottery. A century or so ago there were some famous works at Chelsea, as also at Bow, but latterly everything of the sort in England seems to have gravitated to the great centres of the pottery trade. We can here lay our hand upon a specific result of the Government system of art education especially

Fixing the Tesserae.

spread evenly over the back surface of the tesserae, and, when this has hardened, the mosaic picture, smooth upon the face, and in a panel as hard as brickwork, is ready to be fixed in its place. The ordinary process of working mosaic, known as the Roman or Pope's method, is very tedious. The artist copies the picture before him, not in reverse but directly upon the upper surface, which has to be afterwards ground down till it is smooth. The *opus Anglicanum*, as it is called, is cheaper as well as more expeditious, and that the women students of South Kensington should be able to turn out at a comparatively small expense, and in a short time, such fine pictures in mosaic as those done by them, and now adorning the walls of the Museum, is a fact full of encouragement and promise.



THE students will shortly also be instructed in another method of mosaic known as Minton Campbell's process. This may be briefly said to consist in the artist at once painting his picture upon a vitrified surface, upon which the colours are fixed by further firing. It is an invention full of promise. But a full-size picture by a famous artist costs no trifling sum, and the students will here step in with their skill in copying and enlarging, enabling a small design, which costs only some 15*l.* or 20*l.*, to do the work of a full-size painting, which would cost, perhaps, 300*l.* or 400*l.*



WE now return to Messrs. Minton, Campbell, and Co.'s Art Pottery Studio, hard by the Albert Hall, where a number of students, of whom three-fourths are women, have been doing good work for the past year. Here women have obtained a foothold in a trade in which

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which, at its head-quarters in the Potteries, they would be ill received if received at all. Not long ago the Staffordshire potters would allow no woman to use the "rest" which supports the hand of the pottery-painter ; the exclusion may not now be quite so strict, but it is certain that these students could not be set to work in the Potteries without causing a great deal of ill-feeling, and probably some commotion. This factory or studio is remarkable in several respects. It is the only manufactory of high-class painting on pottery in London, and the work it turns out will, in intrinsic excellence, bear comparison with the present Sèvres, though, as we shall presently show, there is nothing French in its style of art. The principal objects upon which the students are employed in painting are ornamental dishes and plaques, vases, and tiles for working into walls, fireplaces, and mantelpieces. All the work is hand-painted, and dessert plates are the only objects of household use made. Mr. W. S. Coleman, a water-colour artist, has here his studio, and is, we believe, the only present instance of a *bonâ fide* artist painting his own designs on pottery. Our pottery-painters have usually been drawn from mechanics of the upper class, or have been foreigners, wanderers from Paris and other places, who after a time have grown disgusted with our climate and have gone back to their native country. It is to be hoped that more artists will do as Mr. Coleman has done, and turn their attention to making the inside of our houses beautiful. The beauty of the work at this studio and the demand for it is enough to show them that it is not beneath their dignity and is worth their while. Mr. Coleman's figures on plaques and dishes are very pretty, and are for setting in black and gold frames and hanging up as works of art. His figures are naturally and easily drawn, and in a style of his own. A girl
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with a fishing rod and a caught perch, and a Cupid flying through the air after a butterfly, a few slight flower stems rising behind him on a ground of ivory colour, flecked above with a few light-blue clouds, make very pretty dishes. These are purely ornamental, but the tiles for flower boxes, fireplaces, walls of bathrooms, summerhouses, etc., are more practical and not less artistic. A design for the cheeks of a fire-place, representing some boys in combat with a boar, is clever and spirited, though, we suspect, in its details, a great deal of this work inevitably is copied.



THE peculiarity of the pottery painted upon in this studio is the use of what is technically called underglaze colouring; that is, the colours are laid on when the clay is "in biscuit," or unglazed; then the ware is glazed, and the glazing and the colours are burnt in together; the result being a richness and vitreous depth of colour not otherwise obtainable. The more delicate tints, which are not procurable in the underglaze, are laid on afterwards, and fixed by another burning. The palette for underglaze is limited, as few colours will stand the great heat required to fuze the glaze. The painting here practised is entirely opposed to the Sèvres style, and belongs to the school which insists on a difference between decorative and pictorial art. The Watteau pictures with which Sèvres vases are chiefly ornamented give light and shade, and the illusion of distance and relief; but this landscape and portrait style does not find favour at South Kensington, where it is maintained that pure decoration should only form a pattern on the surface. These are nothing more or less than the principals of the old Italian majolica painting, and nearly the whole art practised in the studio is an imitation of this or
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New Manufacture in Mosaic.

of the Japanese school, which also, though not entirely, deals in purely superficial decoration. A vase of a flat circular pattern which at once presents the whole of the picture to the eye, is a good instance of the decorative effect aimed at. The design gives us a woman's head and bust. She smells at a flower, and branches with oranges and a blue ground make up the picture, though it repudiates the name. If the ground were toned and the face shaded, say the disciples of this school, the surface would be lost sight of, and the design would give us the effect of looking into a space, while as it is we see, and ought only to see, a decorated surface.



THIS short account of the Art Industries of South Kensington is enough to show that women out of the Government Art Schools are doing good work in more modes than one. They are, in the first place, earning a livelihood in an honourable way; they are helping to establish a new manufacture in mosaic which is artistically excellent and may one day be a creditable and considerable addition to the art industries practised in this country. In the china factory they are turning out most beautiful work, executed on principles which should not be allowed to interfere with or depreciate other branches of the manufacture, but which are sound in their application to a single and high-class species of art pottery. They are developing a new industry for themselves, and are gaining a footing in an old one by making London the seat of a manufacture which has left it since the days of Chelsea ware. It is true that they are only doing this on a small scale and under the fostering wing of the Institution which educated them; but a beginning is everything, and this seems to have a basis which is sound and capable of indefinite extension. It

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Labour of Women profitable.

is necessary first to show capitalists how the labour of women who have received an art education may be made a legitimate and profitable investment for their capital. This once demonstrated, capitalists will not be slow to take advantage of it. It is curious that the only difference found between the art work of the male and female students is that the latter are quicker and more perfect in the anatomical and skeleton drawing of the human figure. A fact in social science—not without its meaning—is that the female students are drawn generally from a better grade of life than the male. The latter are not often what are technically known as “gentlemen,” while the former are frequently daughters of officers, clergymen, etc., and may be said, as a rule, to belong to the class whom poverty, but not their will, so often forces to be governesses.





